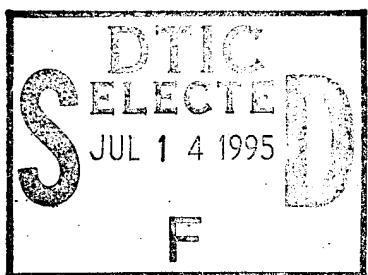


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The Hungarian Exile Movement in the United States  
During World War II and the American Response

In Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree

Russian and East European Institute

Indiana University

May 6, 1995

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### Introduction

As Europe fell under the grip of Adolf Hitler in the years leading up to the 1938 *Anschluss* and annexation of the German-speaking Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia, the political scene in Hungary was marked by policies resembling a clock pendulum. Depending on the Prime Minister at the time, the government's position toward Germany and Italy vacillated between staunchly supportive (Gyula Gömbös), in hopes of achieving Trianon revision, and firmly opposed (Pál Teleki), in hopes of avoiding another post-war plundering. Western power interest in the region prior to March 1938 focused on the recovery of post-World War I loans and modest economic assistance to help rebuild the East European economies after the Great Depression.

As the events of 1938 and 1939 unfolded signaling the start of yet another "war to end all wars," segments of the Hungarian government entertained the idea of establishing an exile government in the United States as a precaution against German occupation of Hungary. The idea was that an exile government could represent the "true" sentiments of the Hungarian people in the event that the official Hungarian government in Budapest became nothing but a German puppet. The exile government would also counter other exile movements from Czechoslovakia and prevent them from gaining the upper hand in Western public opinion at the expense of Hungary. Some of Hungary's most well-known and capable politicians and intellectuals became involved in this

exile movement either in Hungary or in the United States. They included Tibor Eckhardt, leader of the one time Independent Smallholder's Party; Oszkár Jászi, a member of Mihály Károlyi's government following World War I and later a distinguished professor of political science at Oberlin College in Ohio; János Pelényi, Hungarian Minister to the United States from 1933-1940; Rusztem Vámbéry, a noted scholar and journalist; and several others.

Despite this list of notable participants and the support of the Hungarian Government, the Hungarian exile movement in the United States was disorganized and ineffectual. The focus of this paper will be to ascertain the reasons why the Hungarian movement failed to produce any tangible results in the pursuit of "official" Western sympathies for the German-controlled Hungarian Government by examining its evolution, goals and actors. The paper will also examine the United States' response to the movement's activities and American foreign policy toward Hungary during this time.

### Plans For A Western Government

With the replacement of Béla Imrédy by Count Paul Teleki as Prime Minister of Hungary in February 1939, Hungarian policy toward Germany altered course, favoring the Western Powers.<sup>1</sup> Teleki agreed with Horthy that a war fought by Germany against the West would lead to a German defeat. Despite this, Teleki realized that limited co-operation with Germany and Italy was necessary to further the Hungarian public demand for Trianon revision.<sup>2</sup> Teleki also knew, however, that any revision would only be ultimately successful with the understanding and support of the Western Powers. Any territorial gains received solely through the aid of Germany would be taken away by the victorious Allies. With this aim, he undertook revisionist campaigns of his own concentrating on appealing to the West, feeling that any changes brought by this avenue would be more permanent.<sup>3</sup> To foster this agenda, immediately on taking office, Teleki sent a telegram to London to assure the Foreign Office that "although Hungary's geographical and political situation compelled her to cooperate loyally with Germany up to a point, the Hungarian Government attached great importance to the understanding and

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Imre Major, American Hungarian Relations 1918-1944 (Astor, Florida: Danubian Press, Inc., 1974), 216.

<sup>2</sup>John Pelényi, "The Secret Plan for a Hungarian Government in the West at the Outbreak of World War II," Journal of Modern History 36 (May 1964): 170.

<sup>3</sup>Major, 220.

support of the British Government and would never do anything to injure the interests of Great Britain."<sup>4</sup>

The reattachment of Ruthenia to Hungary in 1939 was justified by the Hungarian, British and French Governments by stressing the value of having a united Hungarian-Polish frontier to check Germany's eastward expansion toward the Ukraine and Romania.<sup>5</sup> This eastward expansion became the greatest worry of the Teleki government during the winter of 1939-40.<sup>6</sup> In January 1940, a German general informed the Hungarians that if a future conflict arose between the Soviet Union and Romania over disputed territories causing trouble in the Balkans, Germany would be forced to take steps to secure the oil fields of Ploesti in south-central Romania.<sup>7</sup> This would lead to a German demand for access to Hungarian roads and trains for the movement of German troops to Romania. Such a demand would place the Hungarian Government in the no-win position of discrediting itself in the West by complying with Hitler's demand or facing almost certain occupation by the Wehrmacht by refusing.

It was under this cloud of impending German penetration that Teleki began to make secret preparations for an Hungarian exile

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<sup>4</sup>C.A. Macartney, October Fifteenth, A History of Modern Hungary 1929-1945 (Edinburgh: University Press, 1957), 331.

<sup>5</sup>Major, 221.

<sup>6</sup>Nandor A.F. Dreisziger, Hungary's Way To World War II (Toronto: Hungarian Helicon Association, 1968), 118.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 119.

government in the United States.<sup>8</sup> This was not a new idea. The Hungarian representative to the United States, John Pelényi, drafted a proposal for an exile government which he briefed to Hungarian Foreign Minister István Csáky in Budapest in September 1938.<sup>9</sup> On April 17, 1939 Pelényi sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Teleki explaining the virtues of such an idea and the specifics of making it a reality if Teleki deemed it necessary.<sup>10</sup> Pelényi's main goal for an exile government was to deprive Hitler of any legitimacy and legality for any changes he might bring about in a German-occupied Hungary.<sup>11</sup> In August 1939 Teleki assured Pelényi that his plan was being seriously considered and that Teleki himself would go abroad if the situation permitted.<sup>12</sup>

The plan was put into action in January 1940 when Teleki, acting in consultation with Regent Horthy, sent five million dollars in government funds and securities to America for safe-keeping via his nephew Andor Teleki.<sup>13</sup> Along with the money, Andor Teleki brought handling instructions for the money and a list of individuals authorized to use the funds for the establishment of the exile government. This list included Regent

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>9</sup>Pelényi, 173.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>12</sup>Dreisziger, 1968, 119.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 120.

Horthy, ex-Premier Count Gyula Károlyi and Prime Minister Teleki who could "singly and individually take over the funds and dispose of them" for the defense of Hungarian freedom, and Count Sándor Khuen-Hédervary, György Barcza, Lipót Baranyai, Count István Bethlen and Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, of whom any two together with Pelényi could take over the funds for their disposal in the defense of Hungary.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the money, Teleki and Horthy decided that it was advisable to have a prominent Hungarian political figure prepositioned in the West.<sup>15</sup> The man selected was Tibor Eckhardt, former leader of the Independent Smallholder's Party. To avoid raising suspicions, Eckhardt was sent to the United States on a lecture tour.

Teleki's secret plan for an exile government in the United States was never fully implemented. The grand strategy of Nazi Germany during 1940 made the execution of this plan unnecessary. Questions as to Hitler's next target were answered when he launched his campaigns against northern and western Europe in the spring of 1940.<sup>16</sup> It is also theorized that the plan was postponed by Teleki and Horthy because of veiled threats from Hitler concerning Hungarian cooperation and assistance for Germany's

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<sup>14</sup>Pelényi, 176.

<sup>15</sup>Nandor A.F. Dreisziger, "The Atlantic Democracies and the Movements for a 'Free Hungary' During World War II," 1994, 6. This paper was presented at the Conference for Hungarian Studies at Indiana University on March 5, 1994.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 7.

westward campaign.<sup>17</sup> A letter to Teleki from Hitler emphasizing that the maintenance of Balkan peace was of great interest to the German westward strategy led Teleki and Horthy to determine that the establishment of an exile government was not timely.<sup>18</sup> After receiving the money from Andor Teleki, Minister Pelényi heard nothing else in regards to further actions required of him or actions taken by the Hungarian Government toward the realization of the exile government until the spring of 1940. In a letter dated May 21, 1940 Prime Minister Teleki thanked Pelényi for having assumed the tasks assigned to him.<sup>19</sup> Four days later a cable was received instructing Pelényi to transfer the funds to the Federal Reserve Bank in New York to be credited to the Hungarian National Bank.<sup>20</sup>

Pelényi was never informed that the plan was officially abandoned, but assumed that the powers in Budapest had decided that the plan no longer fit the international situation. Later that same year, in November, Pelényi, his deputy Antal Balassy and other staff members resigned from their diplomatic posts as Pelényi had promised Teleki they would if Hungary's link to Germany progressed to the point of making his official position

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<sup>17</sup>Miklós Szántó, Magyarok Amerikában (Hungarians in America) (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984), 84.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>19</sup>Pelényi, 171.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 171.

meaningless in the defense of Hungarian autonomy.<sup>21</sup> Hungary's signing of the Tripartite Pact resulted in the declaration of war between Great Britain and Hungary thus alienating Hungary from the United States. Pelényi and Balassy requested asylum in the United States deciding that they would be much more helpful to the Hungarian cause as private citizens in the United States rather than government officials of the new Axis member.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>22</sup>Szántó, 84.

## The Exile Movement in America

### Background

As the world watched Germany march across Europe, Hungarian-Americans paid special attention to the events in Hungary and the diplomatic efforts of the Teleki government to maintain its autonomy in the face of increasing German pressure to join the Axis cause. The prevailing sentiment of Hungarian-Americans throughout the interwar period was that the territorial losses imposed on Hungary by the Trianon Treaty of 1920 were unjust and should be remedied. To this end, the main political involvement of Hungarian-Americans during the 1920's and 30's was their efforts to gain United States government support for the revision of the Trianon borders by encouraging American officials to draw a distinction between the Hungarian government, which found itself in an uneasy alliance with Germany during World War I, and the Hungarian nation, which Hungarian-Americans viewed as a victim of the circumstances of the war.<sup>23</sup>

As the decade of the 1930's advanced toward World War II, Hungarian-American loyalties became more solidly in favor of the United States. By this time second and third generation Hungarian-Americans were adults and involved in the activities of

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<sup>23</sup>Steven B. Vardy, "Hungarians in America's Ethnic Politics," in America's Ethnic Politics, ed. Joseph Rousek and Bernard Eisenberg (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 174.

the local communities. They appreciated their ethnic heritage, but, despite ardent attempts by older immigrants to maintain a strong allegiance to Hungary, America was their home.<sup>24</sup> As opposed to the situation during World War I when the Hungarian immigrants supported the United States' position from a sense of fear, during World War II they purchased war bonds, financed ambulances for the Red Cross and encouraged their youth to join the armed forces out of a sense of patriotism and loyalty to the United States.<sup>25</sup>

The Hungarian-Americans' support for and loyalty to the United States did not reduce their interest in the events in Hungary or in the issue of Trianon Revisionism. This is evidenced by the great rejoicing which occurred on September 7, 1940 at a celebration held at the Holy Cross Church in New York City, when a speaker announced to the large gathering of parishioners that the Hungarian Army was marching into the northern part of Transylvania as a result of the territorial awards of the Second Vienna Pact.<sup>26</sup> It was not a case of support for Germany or Nazism. These people were ardent supporters of American democracy. They were simply expressing joy over what they considered

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<sup>24</sup>Steven B. Vardy, The Hungarian-Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 109.

<sup>25</sup>Julianna Puskás, Kivándorló Magyarok az Egyesült Államokban 1880-1940 (Emigrant Hungarians in the United States 1880-1940) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), 406.

<sup>26</sup>Paul Nadanyi, The "Free Hungary" Movement (New York: The Amerikai Magyar Népszava, 1942), 4-5.

partial rectification of the injustices suffered by the Hungarian nation after World War I.

The leading organization directing the Hungarian-American activities was the American Hungarian Federation (AHF). It was originally founded in 1906 in Cleveland, Ohio to serve as the spokesman for the Hungarian-American community.<sup>27</sup> After the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, the primary role of the AHF was to lobby the United States Government for support to change the conditions of the Treaty through the application of President Wilson's Fourteen Points. As the Second World War approached, the AHF and its leading newspaper, The Amerikai Magyar Népszava, turned its focus to convincing the United States Government and population that Hungary was not a willing ally of Hitler's Germany, but rather a victim of its small size, strategic location in the heart of the Danubian Basin and its proximity to the much more powerful German state.<sup>28</sup> This agenda was difficult to sell at times because of the presence of anti-Horthy Hungarian Communists in the United States and the realities of the war. Hungary had territorially benefitted from the First and Second Vienna Awards at the expense of League of Nation members Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, its army fought beside Hitler's against Russia and Hungary declared war on Great Britain and the

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<sup>27</sup>Puskás, 248.

<sup>28</sup>Vardy, 1985, 110.

United States.<sup>29</sup>

In 1939 the AHF reorganized itself for the task at hand during its convention in Pittsburgh and moved its headquarters to Washington, D.C. to be closer to the center of power.<sup>30</sup> Under the intellectual guidance of Tibor Kerekes of Georgetown University, the AHF increasingly presented itself as the "official voice" of the Hungarian-American community. With the return of Tibor Eckhardt to the United States in August 1941, the AHF cause had a notable name and reputation to which to attach itself.

#### Eckhardt's Movement for Independent Hungary

The selection of Tibor Eckhardt to lead the establishment of an exile movement in the United States sparked controversy, in some circles, because of his political past. He had entered the political spotlight early in life, as the Press-Chief of the anti-Communist government in Szeged, during Béla Kun's short-lived Communist government in 1919.<sup>31</sup> During the 1920's, Eckhardt was a member of parliament, serving as a member of the right-wing opposition to Prime Minister Bethlen. It was right-wing activities allegedly participated in by Eckhardt at this

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<sup>29</sup>Joseph Rousek, "Hungarian Americans," in One America, The History, Contributions and Present Problems of Our Racial and National Minorities ed. Francis Brown and Joseph Rousek (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945), 219.

<sup>30</sup>Vardy, 1985, 110.

<sup>31</sup>Nadanyi, 1942, 27.

time which caused the greatest controversy upon his return to the United States in 1941. His role in these activities was exaggerated in some cases, and outright falsified in others. In 1927, he joined the "Hungarian League for Revision," serving as vice-president for fourteen years during the League presidency of Francis Herczegh.<sup>32</sup> Eckhardt became president of the Independent Smallholder's Party, which in 1931 he founded with Gaszton Gaál, in 1932.<sup>33</sup> During the 1930's Eckhardt established himself as a capable diplomat, serving as Hungary's Chief Representative to the League of Nations. It was this expertise which made him a suitable choice to lead the exile movement in the United States.

Eckhardt had returned to Hungary following his 1940 lecture tour after the events in Hungary caused the postponement of the creation of the exile government. In January 1941, however, he was once again summoned by Teleki and Horthy to carry the banner of Hungary to the West. At a conference attended by Bethlen, Eckhardt, Horthy, Teleki and others, a plan was devised wherein Horthy would appoint a government composed of politicians abroad in the event the Germans raised demands wholly incompatible with Hungary's sovereignty.<sup>34</sup> Bethlen was to proceed to London while

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<sup>32</sup>Tibor Eckhardt, Regicide at Marseille (New York: American Hungarian Library and Historical Society, 1964), 96.

<sup>33</sup>Oszkár Jászi, Jászi Oszkár Válogatott levelei (Selected Letters of Oscar Jászi) (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1991), 590.

<sup>34</sup>Gyula Juhász, Hungarian Foreign Policy 1919-1945 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 181.

Eckhardt would go to the United States.

The impetus for this renewal of an exile movement in the West was the receipt of confidential reports from Germany by the Hungarian government that Hitler was preparing for a war against the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup> Teleki, and most other reasonable thinkers in the Hungarian government, believed that such a step would mark the beginning of the end for Germany. Based on this belief, Teleki wanted to prevent Hungarian involvement in such a war and make sure that if Hungary was forced to join the conflict, another government, the Hungarian government in the West, would be ready to take over as the true voice of the Hungarian nation.<sup>36</sup> In attempts to prevent Hungarian involvement in the war against the Soviet Union, Teleki strove for *rapprochement* with the Soviets. His efforts to formulate a non-aggression pact with Moscow was unsuccessful because Horthy opposed such a pact.<sup>37</sup>

Tibor Eckhardt's return journey to America was anything but direct. After spending the previous evening in quiet discussion with Prime Minister Teleki, Eckhardt departed from Budapest on March 7, 1941, under the security of plainclothesmen to ensure that German secret agents did not prevent him from boarding the

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<sup>35</sup>Nandor A.F. Dreisziger, "Bridges to the West: The Horthy Regime's 'Reinsurance Policies' in 1941," War and Society, 7 (May 1989): 3.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 4.

train to Belgrade.<sup>38</sup> His route to the United States took him through Egypt and South Africa before boarding a ship for the trip across the Atlantic.<sup>39</sup> Eckhardt's primary task upon arriving in the United States was to resuscitate the sagging "Movement for an Independent Hungary." He set out to rebuild the movement on an international basis. After consultation with the State Department in Washington to determine the boundaries of his political activities, Eckhardt established the executive committee of his newly named "Independent Hungary" movement.<sup>40</sup> Members of the executive committee included János Pelényi, Antal Balassy, Antal Zsilinszky, former counselor of the Hungarian legation in Washington, and Viktor Bátor, former chief legal advisor of the United States branch of the Commercial Bank of Budapest.<sup>41</sup> In the name of this committee, Eckhardt issued a proclamation on September 27, 1941 outlining the movement's goals. (See appendix for text of proclamation.)

The lofty goals outlined in this first proclamation met with mixed reviews when broadcast in Hungary a few days after its issuance. In government circles the proclamation stirred such resentment that Eckhardt and his associates were deprived of

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<sup>38</sup>Eckhardt, 245.

<sup>39</sup>Dreisziger, 1989, 6.

<sup>40</sup>Nadanyi, 1942, 45.

<sup>41</sup>Dreisziger, 1989, 7.

their Hungarian citizenship.<sup>42</sup> In the countryside, however, according to two Hungarians who left Hungary after the broadcast, the proclamation stirred the people and a new ray of hope seemed to mitigate the darkness that pervaded the country.<sup>43</sup> In the United States the effect of the proclamation was to shed new light on the price of territorial revision for those Hungarian-Americans whose only concern was rectifying Trianon. At the time of the Vienna Awards in 1938 and 1940, many of these people had failed to realize that Germany's gifts of land came at a cost, namely independence and sovereignty. The realities of 1941 led Eckhardt's proclamation to initially unify large numbers of the Hungarian-American community against the consequences of Nazi involvement in Hungarian affairs.

Despite the flourish and optimism with which Eckhardt's proclamation was issued, his campaign was plagued by opposition and controversy from the beginning. The U.S. State Department was not the least of these obstacles. At this point in the war, the United States was still trying to maintain some appearances as a non-belligerent. As such, State Department policy dictated that no official exile governments be allowed to operate from American soil.<sup>44</sup> Also the State Department adopted a policy which greatly restricted the scope of Eckhardt's freedom in

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<sup>42</sup>Nadanyi, 1942, 47.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>44</sup>Dreisziger, 1989, 9.

recruiting support for his cause. It forbade American citizens from joining any official organization that included Hungarian citizens or recent defectors from Hungary.<sup>45</sup> As a result, Eckhardt and his colleagues were forced to form two committees for the promotion of their movement in the United States, one composed of Hungarian citizens (or, more precisely, recent Hungarian citizens—since Eckhardt and his diplomatic colleagues had been stripped of their Hungarian citizenship shortly after the issuance of their proclamation), and one composed of naturalized Hungarian-Americans.<sup>46</sup>

Another setback for Eckhardt's efforts was the outcry of opposition which came from numerous sources. Members of the Little Entente political circles (émigrés from Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia) regarded the establishment of a respectable Hungarian political movement in the West as a threat to their own interests. Left-of-center groups of Hungarian émigrés attacked the movement because they had their own plans for an independent Hungarian movement. Leftist elements, who, on October 6, 1941, held a rally in New York City to announce their support for President Roosevelt's foreign policy agenda and condemn the Horthy government, accused Eckhardt of being a "Hungarian Rudolph Hess" and an agent of the "pro-Nazi" regime in

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 11.

Hungary.<sup>47</sup> In a letter published in the October 21, 1941 edition of The New York Times, László Fényes, a pro-Soviet Communist, questioned Eckhardt's qualifications to be leader of an anti-Nazi movement by recalling events of Eckhardt's political past.

Fényes noted that Eckhardt was president of the Awakening Hungarians, the first anti-Semitic, fascist organization in Europe in the early years of the Horthy regime; as the propaganda chief for Count Bethlen in the 1920's, he advocated a German orientation and he voted for anti-Jewish legislation while a member of parliament.<sup>48</sup> Fényes also suggested the necessity for evidence of Eckhardt's democratic convictions since he was considered by many to be a recent convert to the democratic ideals outlined in his proclamation.<sup>49</sup>

The public character bashing of Eckhardt had far-reaching implications for his movement. Canadian government officials, in consultation with the State Department, were inclined not to grant Eckhardt permission to establish a chapter of his organization in Canada.<sup>50</sup> Despite the fact that British officials considered Eckhardt's organization the most substantial among the various Free Hungary movements, especially in the United States, they felt that neither it nor its rivals "could be so far de-

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<sup>47</sup>Szántó, 86.

<sup>48</sup>Letter to the Editor of The New York Times by László Fényes published on October 21, 1941 on page 21.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>50</sup>Dreisziger, 1994, 11.

scribed as being representative of opinion in Hungary to a degree which justified... recognition.<sup>51</sup> In the United States, in December 1941, the State Department decided to distance itself from Eckhardt's most influential supporter, the AHF. This move was made to counter claims by the Federation's leaders that they had the support of the administration in Washington.<sup>52</sup>

To counter the bad publicity, some of Eckhardt's followers attempted to counter the attacks against him. Candler Cobe wrote a rebuttal to Fényes' letter to The New York Times. In it he praised Eckhardt for his commitment to democratic ideals while the leader of the Independent Smallholder's Party in the Hungarian Parliament and for his efforts in bridging the gap between the governments of the successor states while serving as Hungary's representative to the League of Nations.<sup>53</sup> Paul Nadanyi, editor of the Hungarian-American publication The Amerikai Magyar Népszava, wrote a pamphlet outlining the "Free Hungary" movement and detailing its leaders and opponents. He countered claims of anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism in regards to Eckhardt by describing the evolution of Eckhardt's political philosophy from a follower of the rightist Gyula Gömbös to a defender of peasant and smallholder rights.<sup>54</sup> To strengthen his case in the eyes of

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>53</sup>Letter to the Editor of The New York Times by Candler Cobe published on October 21, 1941 on page 21.

<sup>54</sup>Nadanyi, 1942, 25-31.

the American public, he enlisted the help of former American Ambassador to Hungary John F. Montgomery, a personal acquaintance of Eckhardt's. Following a request by Nadanyi for a character reference of Eckhardt to be published in its entirety in Nadanyi's publication, Montgomery responded with a detailed letter countering accusations that Eckhardt was a Nazi, fascist and anti-Semite.<sup>55</sup> Montgomery also indicated that the Eckhardt was on good personal terms with members of the Czechoslovakian government, contrary to what was published in New York papers at the time.<sup>56</sup>

Whatever the motives of the opponents to Eckhardt and his movement, they succeeded in casting sufficient doubt on his credibility so as to lead the United States government to issue an official statement in April 1942 denying that any "formal or informal" recognition had been extended to the Independent Hungary Movement led by Tibor Eckhardt in contradiction to the claims made by the AHF.<sup>57</sup> This marked the effective end of Eckhardt's committee. Eckhardt took a few weak and uncertain steps to keep the committee together including a letter to The New York Times published April 12, 1942 stating that State Department recognition of his movement could not be denied

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>57</sup>"U.S. Recognition Denied," The New York Times April 10, 1942, 5.

because he never asked for it.<sup>58</sup> Eckhardt instead wrote that he was "...merely asking the opinion of the competent authorities of the United States Government..." to help guide his conduct in America.<sup>59</sup> In a direct criticism of his opponents, Eckhardt wrote, "It would be comical-were it not so tragic-that groups or individuals in the United States, presumably opposed to Nazism, are engaged in trying to discredit the Movement for Independent Hungary and my person in this country by resorting to the same tactics as are employed by Mr. Goebbels' propaganda machine in its attempts to impair my influence and the authority of this same Movement in Hungary herself."<sup>60</sup> This was Eckhardt's last major role in the exile movement in the United States during World War II. On July 25, 1942 Eckhardt announced that he was going to give up the chairmanship of the movement and would not continue his operation during the time of war "because he could not obtain the support of all the Hungarian elements living in exile."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Letter to the Editor of The New York Times by Tibor Eckhardt published on April 12, 1942 in section 4, page 9.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>61</sup>Szántó, 87.

### Other Exile Movements

Among the loudest critics of Eckhardt's movement were left-of-center Hungarian emigré groups who had planned their own fight for an independent Hungary. These groups tended to be more populist and liberal than Eckhardt's. With the exit of Eckhardt from the political scene, these progressive rivals had a chance to assert themselves and try to fill the void left by Eckhardt's departure. The efforts of these groups centered around the plan to bring Count Mihály Károlyi, the leader of the 1918-1919 democratic revolution in Hungary, from Great Britain to the United States to head a worldwide movement of progressive Hungarian exiles.<sup>62</sup>

While the Hungarian-American left was already established in the United States before 1941, word of Eckhardt's arrival in America prompted it into action.<sup>63</sup> Unlike the right which concentrated around the AHF, the left was not a cohesive community. This would prove to be a major deterrent to the successful achievement of its goals. There were divisions along class and ideological lines, as well as differences in outlook between the old immigrants and the more recent arrivals. There was also little cooperation between groups centered in various

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<sup>62</sup>Dreisziger, 1994, 15.

<sup>63</sup>Nandor A.F. Dreisziger, "Oscar Jaszi and the 'Hungarian Problem:' Activities and Writings during World War II," Hungarian Studies Review 18 (1991): 62.

geographical locations such as Cleveland, Chicago and New York.

The leading leftist organization fighting for a free and democratic Hungary was the American Federation of Democratic Hungarians (AFDH) which came into being in Cleveland only weeks before Eckhardt's proclamation in September 1941.<sup>64</sup> The AFDH was created as the American branch of Count Károlyi's anti-fascist movement. Initially wanting Oszkár Jászi, a longtime friend and political opponent, to go to London to assist him in his efforts, Károlyi accepted Jászi's recommendation that there be an American- and a London-based group so that they could more effectively counter the efforts of Eckhardt.<sup>65</sup> The leaders of the AFDH were Oszkár Jászi and Rusztem Vámbéry, a publicist, scholar and university teacher. The organization's immediate goal was to separate the true anti-fascists from the alleged "Trojan horse crowd" which congregated around Eckhardt.<sup>66</sup> The long term objective was to build a democratic Hungary free of feudalism and capitalism and economically restructured through the implementation of radical land reform and establishment of producers' cooperatives.<sup>67</sup>

The stated goals of ending capitalism and implementing

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>65</sup>György Litván, "Documents of a Friendship: From the Correspondence of Michael Károlyi and Oszkar Jászi," East Central Europe 4 (1977): 139.

<sup>66</sup>Dreisziger, 1991, 64.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 65.

producer cooperatives sounded too much like communism for many Hungarian-Americans who remembered the 1919 Communist Republic under Béla Kun. The AFDH's condemnation of Horthy and his prime ministers, especially Gömbös, Darányi, Imrédy and Bárdossy, for being too indecisive and accommodating to Hitler, received positive reviews. However, just as with Eckhardt's movement, recruiting sufficient numbers of the Hungarian-American community into its fold was a persistent problem for the organization. To overcome this obstacle, the AFDH realigned the Hungarian-American left at its annual meeting in 1942 by launching a sister movement called the New Democratic Hungary (NDH).<sup>68</sup> This movement was to target the less "compromised" members of Eckhardt's entourage, as determined primarily by Jászi and Vámbéry, and step into the vacuum created when Eckhardt's organization suspended activities. The results were less than successful. The key individuals sought by the NDH, Antal Balássy and Béla Bartók, rejected invitations to join the Jászi-Vámbéry-led coalition, because they considered Jászi and Vámbéry to be "compromised" based on activities leading up to the 1919 Kun Communist government.

Another reason for the separation of the AFDH was a growing rift between Jászi and Vámbéry. In a letter to Count Károlyi in May 1942, Jászi admitted that he was pessimistic about the potential for success because he was having an increasingly

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 65.

difficult time working with Vámbéry and his New York group.<sup>69</sup>

Jászi also indicated that he was willing to extend an open hand of cooperation to Eckhardt, which Vámbéry adamantly opposed, but Jászi doubted it would produce anything meaningful.<sup>70</sup>

The final failure of the AFDH-NDH movement was its inability to secure a visa for Count Károlyi to enter the United States. Early in 1942, Károlyi felt it would be advantageous for him to relocate his headquarters to the United States where he could lead the fight against Eckhardt's right wing organization. While Jászi and Károlyi differed on several political points, their mutual commitment to saving Hungary from Hitler permitted them to work closely together during the war years. Jászi led the efforts to get a visa for Károlyi, expressing frustration on numerous occasions over the lack of State Department action on the request while visas were being issued to Eckhardt, Otto von Habsburg and other alleged Horthy supporters.<sup>71</sup> In a letter to Vámbéry in April 1942, Jászi suggested that the energy used to fight Eckhardt and other rightist groups was detracting from what Jászi considered "a legfontosabb feladatunk" (our most important assignment), namely the securing of a visa for Károlyi.<sup>72</sup> The visa was never to come and the leadership of the AFDH and NDH

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<sup>69</sup>Jászi, 445.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 445.

<sup>71</sup>Litván, 139.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 442.

were blamed.

This failure to obtain a visa for Károlyi led to the creation of yet another leftist organization under the leadership of the filmstar Béla Lugosi. Lugosi led a group of democratic Hungarians, who were dissatisfied with the leadership of Jászi and Vambéry, in undertaking a truly vigorous campaign to bring Károlyi to the United States. Their organization was called the Hungarian-American Council for Democracy (HACD).<sup>73</sup> The success of this organization was no better than that of the others. It failed to garner enough support to be a viable representative of the Hungarian-American community and it failed to persuade the State Department to issue a visa for Count Károlyi.

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<sup>73</sup>Dreisziger, 1994, 19.

### Reasons for Failure

The record of success for each of the exile movements described above was limited. All of the movements, regardless of their political allegiance, failed to gain the one element which could have given them credibility and ultimate success: recognition from the Allied governments. In the case of the United States, the December 1941 decision by the State Department not to favor any "Free Movement" over another prevented any of them from receiving official recognition. In general, the American government did not view any of the movements as being truly representative of the majority of Hungarians. Furthermore, the FBI, which kept a watchful eye on all these organizations, could not imagine any of them being able to help the Allied war effort.<sup>74</sup> The division within the Hungarian emigré community over what kind of government should prevail in post-war Hungary led to the assessment by the FBI that "confusion and polemics" reigned in Hungarian-American circles which "effectively neutralized the assistance any of these groups might otherwise give to the war effort."<sup>75</sup>

In examining the reasons for the failures of the individual movements, Eckhardt's Independent Hungary stands out as the one both easiest and hardest to understand. Even before he arrived

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<sup>74</sup>Dreisziger, 1994, 20.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 20.

in the United States in 1941, his mission was attacked by the Hungarian-American left as a Horthyite attempt to protect the aristocratic, feudal arrangement which it charged had existed in Hungary since the rise of Horthy to power in 1920.<sup>76</sup> These accusations were based on the government's poor record toward land reform and reluctance to implement universal suffrage with a secret ballot. It was felt that if Horthy and his government were forced to capitulate to the Germans, Eckhardt's "government" would return to Hungary after the war to carry on the Horthy tradition of protecting the aristocrats and bourgeoisie, at the expense of the peasants. As early as April and May 1941, Count Károlyi began enlisting the help of Jászi and Vámbéry to build an anti-fascist movement to counter Eckhardt's yet unborn movement.<sup>77</sup> (Remember at this time Eckhardt is somewhere between Cairo and South Africa trying to avoid the Germans on his way to America.)

Once he did arrive and formally issued his proclamation launching his "Independent Hungary" movement, the opposition intensified its attacks on Eckhardt's personal and professional past. The accusations included, among other things, that Eckhardt had been involved in the tragedy of the "White Terror" as a member, and later president, of the Awakening Magyars, a

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<sup>76</sup>Jászi, 435.

<sup>77</sup>Litván, 138.

notoriously vicious anti-Semitic organization.<sup>78</sup> As mentioned previously, these accusations were at best exaggerations, and at worst blatant lies. It was also alleged that Eckhardt was in charge of covering up the rumored role of the Hungarian government in the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia, if in fact he was not one of the chief conspirators of the assassination.<sup>79</sup> To bring current events into the picture, Eckhardt opponents went so far as to accuse him of being a member of the Arrow Cross movement, the fifth columnists of Hitler in Hungary.<sup>80</sup> Considering the great disdain on the part of the Hungarians for anything German, it is easy to see why these statements against Eckhardt would catch the eye of the Hungarian-American community and cast a shadow of doubt on his motives for coming to America. This is even more understandable given that he was sent by the Horthy government which some members of the emigré community blamed for the situation in which Hungary then found herself.

Despite the bad publicity, Eckhardt's movement had the potential to develop into an effective lobby for the Hungarian cause. It was the best financed, having the backing of the Hungarian government and the local support of the formidable AHF. With respected politicians such as Pelényi and Bálassy assisting

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<sup>78</sup>Nadanyi, 1942, 26-27.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 39.

Eckhardt, the movement had considerable contacts within the American government with which to gain access to the highest levels of the State Department and the Roosevelt Administration. In Eckhardt, the movement had a polished statesman who, as a member of the opposition party, was selected to serve as Hungary's delegate to the League of Nations following the death of Count Albert Apponyi.<sup>81</sup> However, these assets were not enough to overcome the State Department's unwillingness to provide recognition. Without this, Hungarian-Americans loyal to the United States were reluctant to throw their complete support behind the Eckhardt movement.

As for the left wing movements which arose in opposition to Eckhardt, their potential was never substantial. The only common bond between them was their distrust and dislike of Eckhardt and what he supposedly represented. Their organizations depended on well-known names such as Jászi, Vámbéry and Lugosi for recognition among the community, but they lacked the depth of political experience to effectively rally the Hungarian-American masses to their cause and to gain the confidence and support of the American government. Due to the proliferation of leftist organizations, the financial resources available for any one of them was extremely limited. This became an even greater problem as the war dragged on, because increasingly more splinter organizations emerged as the success rate of the founding

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 34.

organizations proved to be less than was originally hoped.

Collectively, the Hungarian emigré movements were also plagued by an effective propaganda campaign carried out by the exile movements of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, both allies of the Western Powers. Eduard Benes, leader of the Czech movement, was particularly vocal about the dangers to the future of Czechoslovakia in the event Hungarian revisionist demands were given an audience in the West. He was adamantly opposed to Eckhardt's movement because of Eckhardt's links to the Horthy government. As for the left wing movements, his opinion of them was only slightly more moderate than his opinion of Eckhardt. The advantage Benes had with the leftist organizations was that he knew that they knew they needed his empathy, if not outright approval, if they were to gain any credibility with the Allies. This led to constant accusations by one leftist leader about another that he was under the thumb of the Czech exile leadership.<sup>82</sup>

Another reason the movements failed to accomplish anything significant was that the people they were trying to reach out to for support were often second and third generation emigrants. These people considered themselves Americans of Hungarian heritage rather than Hungarians living in the United States.<sup>83</sup> Their loyalties and energies were devoted first to the American

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<sup>82</sup>Dreisziger, 1994, 24.

<sup>83</sup>Vardy, 1985, 110.

war effort. They were sympathetic to the Hungarian plight, and were willing to help where possible, but their first loyalty was to their new homeland. This attitude made it very difficult for the various movements to recruit the support necessary to be considered sufficiently representative of the Hungarian people to warrant the support and recognition of the United States government. This lack of recognition, in turn, hindered recruiting efforts.

While all the above liabilities played a role in the outcome of the Hungarian emigré movements, the one obstacle, which if overcome could have lessened the impact of all the others, was the inability of the various movements to put aside their political differences and come together for the sake of Hungary's post-war future. It would be naive to think that these movements could have operated in a complete political vacuum, but wasting an opportunity to prevent Hungary from repeating the humiliating experience of entering the peace talks as a vanquished German ally served no one's purpose. Eckhardt came to the United States with a plan formulated in Hungary for an exile government that, with the unified support of the emigré community, could have served as a useful tool to garner support for the Hungarian government's claim that it was an involuntary participant in the German war machine. This is not to say that the Eckhardt plan was perfect or that Eckhardt was the only emigrant in the United States with the ability to lead a true coalition movement. However, the Eckhardt movement had the initial financial and

organizational backing from which an effective, broadly based movement could be built. History reveals, however, that this was not to be the chosen course of the Hungarian-American emigré community. Instead the individual political ideological foundations of the various groups, and perhaps the personal egos of the respective leaders, determined that each group would put forth its own plan based on the desired post-war Hungarian governmental structure.

This is not difficult to understand when the age and experiences of the people involved is considered. The majority of the actors in this political drama were in their prime during the previous world crisis in 1914-1918. By the time World War II erupted, men such as Jászi, Károlyi, Vámbéry and Fényes were elderly gentlemen whose attitudes and perspectives had been so strongly influenced by the events of World War I, the succeeding political turmoil and the Trianon Peace Treaty that they were unable or unwilling to view the possibilities for Hungary from any vantage point but their own. Eckhardt, while not quite as old, was equally committed to his political stand.

### American Policy

To understand the lukewarm response the Hungarian movements received from the United States government, it is important to know something about the policy of the United States toward Hungary in the years directly preceding and during World War II. As is well known, United States foreign policy after World War I was essentially isolationist. The United States did not join the League of Nations and played a minimal role in the politics of Europe during the 1920's and 1930's. One country, however, gained the attention of newly-elected President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 because of its location in the heart of East-Central Europe and the rise of Hitler to power in Germany: Hungary.<sup>84</sup> To keep in touch with the events in this part of the world, Roosevelt sent John Flournoy Montgomery to Budapest as his personal envoy with instructions to periodically send reports directly to him.<sup>85</sup> The presence of Mr. Montgomery in Budapest did not lead to a significant change in American policy toward Hungary or Europe. Rather, he was there as an observer, as an American scout reporting on the imperialist actions of Germany and the Soviet Union.

During this time, American relations with Hungary were

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<sup>84</sup>Major, 189.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 189.

primarily economic. The multimillion dollar investments made by numerous American financial concerns during the 1920's were negated by the Great Depression of the 1930's.<sup>86</sup> It wasn't until European Gas and Electric Company, an affiliate of the American petroleum giant Standard Oil Company, commenced exploration and development of the oil and natural gas fields in Hungary in 1934 that the reemergence of American capital was solidified.<sup>87</sup> In 1937 the first commercial oil well was discovered and, in accordance with the contract between Standard Oil and the Hungarian government, a Hungarian company was formed to handle production, transportation and marketing.<sup>88</sup> This company, entirely owned by Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, was named Magyar Amerikai Olajpari Részvénnytársaság (Hungarian-American Oil Company, Limited) or MAORT for short.<sup>89</sup> The economic effect of this venture on Hungary was substantial, not only in terms of the revenue produced by the wells, but also in terms of the increased standard of living enjoyed by the workers in the communities which grew around the oil fields. Employees received higher wages than the average Hungarian, the company started schools for the children and technical schools for the workers and provided other social benefits by building such amenities as sports clubs,

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<sup>86</sup>Major, 186.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 212.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 212.

swimming pools and athletic fields for the workers and their families.<sup>90</sup> By the time World War II arrived, Budapest became more than a listening post of diplomacy, since Hungary was now one of the most important business partners of the United States in Eastern Europe.

Diplomatically, the United States maintained its position of isolationism and neutrality. Montgomery was asked on several occasions to obtain American assistance for Hungary in her quest to follow the anti-Hitler path.<sup>91</sup> When Hungary was forced to decide on a German demand, Montgomery's response would be to warn Hungary of the bad impression such a capitulation would make in America.<sup>92</sup> Montgomery was never able to promise aid from the United States. On the contrary, the initial American reaction to the Hungarian annexation of Ruthenia as a result of the first Vienna Award which Montgomery was instructed to pass on to Prime Minister Teleki and Regent Horthy warned of President Roosevelt's hope that Hungary would not again "be so unfortunate as to find herself on the side which wins the early battles but loses the war."<sup>93</sup> After learning that the occupation of Ruthenia had been accomplished against the wishes of Hitler, the State Department issued another message, more supportive than the first,

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 213.

<sup>91</sup>John Flournoy Montgomery, Hungary: The Unwilling Satellite (New Jersey: Devin-Adair Company, 1947), 116.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>93</sup>Major, 221.

indicating that the American government was of the belief that the best elements of Hungary would strongly resist being dragged into war by Germany.<sup>94</sup>

American foreign policy regarding the war was based on a democratic ideology and dependent on the tempers and changes of public opinion.<sup>95</sup> While this contributed to the idealism with which young Americans went into battle, it prevented the public from realizing the political and territorial problems the warring alliance was certain to face. Americans viewed World War II as a battle against Hitler and Nazism. They failed to realize that it was equally a battle over the consequences of the post-World War I peace treaties. The Hungarian territorial issues were unknown to most Americans. In governmental circles, American sympathies were with the Hungarian people. This had to be discreetly maintained, however, because of the strong stance Britain had taken with regard to Hungarian acceptance of the Second Vienna Award of Transylvania and the participation of Hungarian troops in Germany's war with Russia.<sup>96</sup>

Following the British declaration of war against Hungary in December 1941, the United States Minister to Hungary, Herbert Pell, served also as the British link to the Hungarian government.<sup>97</sup> Shortly after this declaration came the German

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 221.

<sup>95</sup>John Lukacs, The Great Powers and Eastern Europe (New York: American Book Company, 1953): 435.

<sup>96</sup>Major, 228.

declaration of war against the United States. This was significant because once again Hungary was torn between the desire to maintain close ties to the American government and German's demands that she follow the German lead and declare war on the United States. Prime Minister Bárdossy reluctantly decided to break diplomatic relations with the United States hoping that this would appease Hitler for the time being.<sup>98</sup> It was not enough. The next day, Bárdossy was forced to declare to Minister Pell that a state of war existed between Hungary and the United States, with the understanding that the declaration came at the insistence of the German government.<sup>99</sup> Pell's response was indicative of the understanding of the American government for the Hungarian situation when he said, "I know that you are doing this under heavy pressure from Germany, and that the declaration reflects no hostility on the part of the Hungarian people towards the people of the United States."<sup>100</sup> It took six months and the urging of Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov for the

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<sup>97</sup>László Zsigmond, ed., Magyarország és a Második Világ-Háború: Titkos Diplomáciai Okmányok (Hungary and the Second World War: Secret Diplomatic Documents) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1966), 351.

<sup>98</sup>László Bárdossy, A Nemzet Védelmében (In Defense of The Nation) (Verlag, Switzerland: Duna Könyvkiadó, 1976), 61.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>100</sup>Macartney, 63.

United States to "accept" the Hungarian declaration of war.<sup>101</sup>

On March 9, 1942 Prime Minister Bárdossy was replaced by Miklós Kállay, a strong opponent of the German government, who Horthy hoped could revive closer relations with the West following the war declarations of the previous fall.<sup>102</sup> Horthy and his closest advisor, Count István Bethlen, thought Bárdossy had been too weak in dealing with the pressure, diplomatic and otherwise, exerted by the German government.<sup>103</sup> Over the next two years Kállay initiated numerous efforts to conclude a secret peace with the Western Allies. For the most part, the American response to these Hungarian initiatives can be summed up by Roosevelt's reply to a telegram shown him by Churchill, while they were meeting in Quebec in September 1943, regarding a meeting between British Foreign Minister Eden and László Veress, a Hungarian negotiator. Churchill's response to Eden simply stated, "The president read the telegram, but his reaction was not noteworthy, although he remarked that it was very interesting."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Péter Sipos and István Vida, "The Policy of the United States Towards Hungary During the Second World War," Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae trans. Julianna Parti, 29 (1983): 85.

<sup>102</sup>Zsigmond, 359.

<sup>103</sup>Count István Bethlen, Hungarian Politics During World War Two trans. Victor de Stankovich, (Munich: Ungarisches Institut, 1985), 11.

<sup>104</sup>Juhász Gyula, Magyar-Brit Titkos Tárgyalások 1943-ban (Hungarian-British Secret Negotiations in 1943) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1978): 235.

Throughout the remainder of the war the focus of American policy toward Hungary was on devising a plan for post-war Eastern Europe. The task of formulating a plan fell to the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy set up by the State Department with the approval of President Roosevelt in December 1941.<sup>105</sup> It was this committee on which much of the attention from the various Hungarian movements in the United States was focused. The main thrust of the Advisory Committee was to devise a plan for a Danubian Federation in an attempt to correct the mistakes of the Trianon Treaty.<sup>106</sup> The idea for such a federation, which gained the title "Mid-European Union" within the State Department, was first raised in the United States in 1918 when the fate of the Habsburg Monarchy was sealed.<sup>107</sup> The idea was shelved shortly thereafter because the United States left the Paris peace talks, failed to negotiate an acceptable League of Nations charter and isolationism became the order of the day. Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, the issue of Habsburg restoration was not on the American agenda. It was not until the late 1930's, and the threat of Hitler became more evident, that the subject received more attention in the State Department. The prolific writings of Oscar Jászi and Otto von Habsburg, among others, on the subject of a Danubian Federation brought the idea

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<sup>105</sup> Ignác Romsics, Wartime American Plans for a New Hungary, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992): xv.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 5.

back to the table as a possible solution to the minorities and territorial problems of East-Central Europe. Jászi went so far as to write a letter to President Roosevelt in July 1940, in which he encouraged the U.S. Government to take an active role in protecting the rights of minorities and citizens of occupied countries.<sup>108</sup>

The first powerful supporter of this idea within the State Department was Sumner Welles, Undersecretary of State.<sup>109</sup> On the evidence of John Montgomery and Otto von Habsburg, President Roosevelt himself was planning a Danubian Federation to unify the Danube region.<sup>110</sup> Roosevelt had established a rapport with Otto von Habsburg which allowed von Habsburg's opinions on the subject of Danubian Reconstruction to be heard at the highest levels of the U.S. Government, positively influencing both the White House and the State Department.<sup>111</sup> By 1942, when the committee started work in earnest, some level of political cooperation between the countries of the region was taken for granted and the Political Subcommittee in charge of regional planning spent considerable time examining four concrete proposals. The proposals considered were those of Wladislaw Sikorski, London head of the Polish government-in-exile, Eduard Benes, Otto von Habsburg and a joint

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<sup>108</sup>Jászi, 431.

<sup>109</sup>Romsics, 6.

<sup>110</sup>Major, 241.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 241.

plan worked out by Tibor Eckhardt and János Pelényi.<sup>112</sup>

The Subcommittee's goal was to create as large and as strong a unit as possible so that it could be insurance against a possible German or Russian attack and so that it would be economically viable. The Eckhardt-Pelényi plan and Habsburg plan were discounted early in the debate because they called for multiple federative units modeled after the Austro-Hungarian Empire, thus creating units too small to individually satisfy the security and economic criteria.<sup>113</sup> After months of debate and testimony from members of Hungarian, Polish and Czech exile movements, the Benes and Sikorski plans were deemed unfeasible because there was little support among the emigré politicians for a single unit encompassing the area from the Baltics to the Adriatic and from Germany to Russia. This brought back the possibility of the Eckhardt-Pelényi and Habsburg plans. As of the summer of 1943, the Political Subcommittee was unable to come up with a unanimous proposal to put forth to the entire body.<sup>114</sup> Soon after that it seemed no longer necessary since it was becoming more and more obvious that any decision which might be reached was going to be made by the Soviet Union, not the United States or Great Britain.<sup>115</sup> The rest of the war was spent deciphering the various

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<sup>112</sup>Romsics, 6.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 10.

Soviet plans for post-war Eastern Europe to determine which would or would not be acceptable. As history shows, even that was a futile exercise.

This discussion of American foreign policy as it pertained to Hungary shows the level of significance attributed to Hungary during this time. The Hungarian declaration of war was not taken seriously, the State Department stymied emigré efforts to gain recognition for their movements and, ultimately, the United States gave in to Soviet demands for control of the entire East-Central European region. By 1943, East-Central Europe had come under the Soviet sphere of influence, thereby lessening the chances for any significant diplomatic breakthroughs on Hungary's behalf.

### Conclusion

At the outbreak of World War II, Hungary was a small nation trying to protect her independence and autonomy from the expansionist German machine. To hedge her bet, Hungary decided to try to follow the example of the successful Czech exile movement in World War I. Teleki and Horthy sent one of Hungary's respected statesmen, Tibor Eckhardt, to the United States to establish a skeleton organization which could become an exile government speaking for the Hungarian nation if the times deemed it necessary. The result was a parade of critics from the left wing of the Hungarian-American community looking out for their own interests rather than the interests of Hungary, and an American State Department which declined to issue formal recognition to any Hungary movement. The list of notable figures present in the United States during this time with an interest in the fate of Hungary is a who's who of Hungarian history of the twentieth century. There were numerous plans which could have been effective if all Hungarian sympathizers had worked together. As it was, the pie was cut into too many pieces resulting in no one getting the support needed.

As for the American role in the failure of these movements, it was a matter of Hungary being important, but not important enough. Initially, as a non-belligerent, the United States wanted to refrain from getting directly involved in peripheral issues for fear of being lured into the heart of the problem.

Once in the war, Hungary had already gone too far toward capitulating to the Germans for the United States to take a strong stance in support of an "ally" of the enemy. History may deem that decision a mistake considering the forty-five years of communist rule from which Hungary and her neighbors just recently emerged.

## APPENDIX

### "Proclamation"

Nazi aggression against the freedom of peoples has destroyed Hungary's independence. Hitler's army marching into Hungary deprived the government of its freedom of action and silenced public opinion. The protest which surged up in the heart of every Hungarian was revealed by Prime Minister Count Teleki who laid down his life in tragic revolt against the enforced besmirching of Hungary's glorious record among nations. Step by step, Hungary has been tricked and forced into the Nazi-conceived European "New Order" of exploitation, spiritual and physical slavery and endless bloodshed to serve the Nazi craving for domination in disregard of Hungary's own vital interests.

Hungary-the Kingdom founded by St. Stephen where almost a thousand years ago an independent and stable form of government was established after repelling the German foe;-the land where every hill and field has been hallowed by the blood of generations fallen in the defense of Freedom;-the land where the bells of Torda chimed forth the world's first Proclamation of religious equality;-the land where the traditions still re-echo the sound of these bells and of the kettle drums of Rakoczi which called to the defense of "God and Liberty";-the land where Petöfi, the immortal bard of liberty, sealed his faith with his blood;-the land where Kossuth stamped his legions out of the ground to fight for Independence;-Hungary-the classic battleground of Freedom again lies trampled under the heel of Germany. In this intolerable situation, we Hungarians living outside of Hungary, fortunate in being able to express our views freely, have not only the right but also the sacred duty to give voice to the genuine convictions of the Hungarian people and to take up the fight against Nazi domination. The fate of our nation depends wholly upon the outcome of this fight for independence. The magnitude of the task, the supreme values at stake demand the united effort of all Hungarians wherever they may be. No difference in party or religious affiliations, or of racial origin, no class distinction shall be allowed to separate us.

Let us join hands to dedicate ourselves once more to the service of our traditions of true Christian ideals, respect of human rights and national independence. In fighting for these high ideals, we are inspired by eternal aspirations of free men everywhere, as expressed in the American Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights, as well as the third point of the joint declaration of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, wishing to "see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."

We solemnly declare that the Hungarian nation is not responsible for the policies and acts of its present government whose decisions are obviously subject to Nazi pressure.

Therefore, regardless of the attitude of the Hungarian government, we pledge ourselves to fight for a Hungary, sovereign within, independent without.

We must act without delay! Therefore, we have formed an Executive Committee to lead the fight for "Independent Hungary." We have done so after mature consideration of Hungary's vital interests, fully conscious of the responsibilities which we assume and in response to the unanimous demand of patriotic Hungarian masses awaiting our call everywhere.

Hungarian Nationals living in free countries!

We now call upon you to organize immediately the movement for "Independent Hungary" in order to Unite in each country all Hungarians professing these ideals.

Citizens of free countries who are of Hungarian descent!

We now call upon you to create within the laws and policies of each country your own organization to endorse and support the movement for "Independent Hungary."

Hungarians wherever you live in subjugated Europe!

We now fight for you, for your liberation! We are certain of your approval and confident of your support.

This fight for freedom shall be continued until the Independence of Hungary and the constitutional liberties of her people have been completely restored.

So help us God!

TIBOR ECKHARDT  
President of the Executive Committee  
"Independent Hungary"

New York, N.Y., on the 27th day of September  
in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-one.

\*Proclamation is from the printed copy in Paul Nadanyi's pamphlet The "Free Hungary" Movement.

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